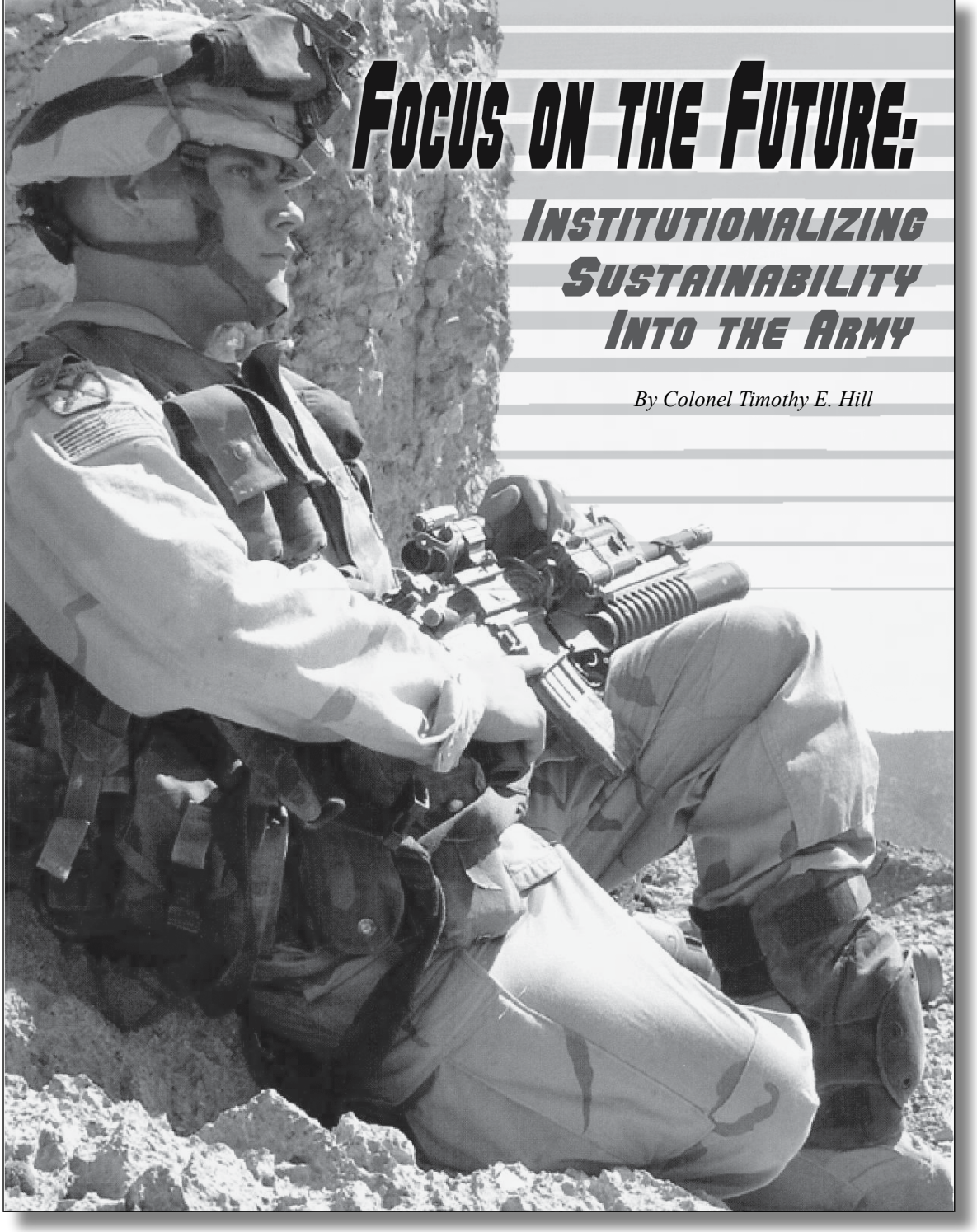

Focus on the Future:

Institutionalizing Sustainability Into the Army

By Colonel Timothy E. Hill

One hundred years from now, when the Army's senior leaders reflect on how well the Army of 2008 coped with its challenges across the globe, will they conclude that the Army succeeded by adopting a strategic vision that included sustainable development?[1] The answer should be in the affirmative.

Sustainable development owes its understanding to the concept of sustainability, which is defined as meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.[2] In other words, it means not squandering, depleting, or abusing the earth and its resources, but enhancing, enriching, and preserving them.[3] An Army that focuses on sustainability is an institution that seeks to maintain its organizational vitality and recognizes and values its stewardship responsibilities. Thus, institutionalizing sustainability through education and making it an integral feature of military operations will not only facilitate its introduction into Army culture but makes eminent sense for mission success as well.

Defining Sustainability

The term *sustainability* can be confusing to some in the Army because it sounds similar to other frequently used Army terms such as *sustainment* or

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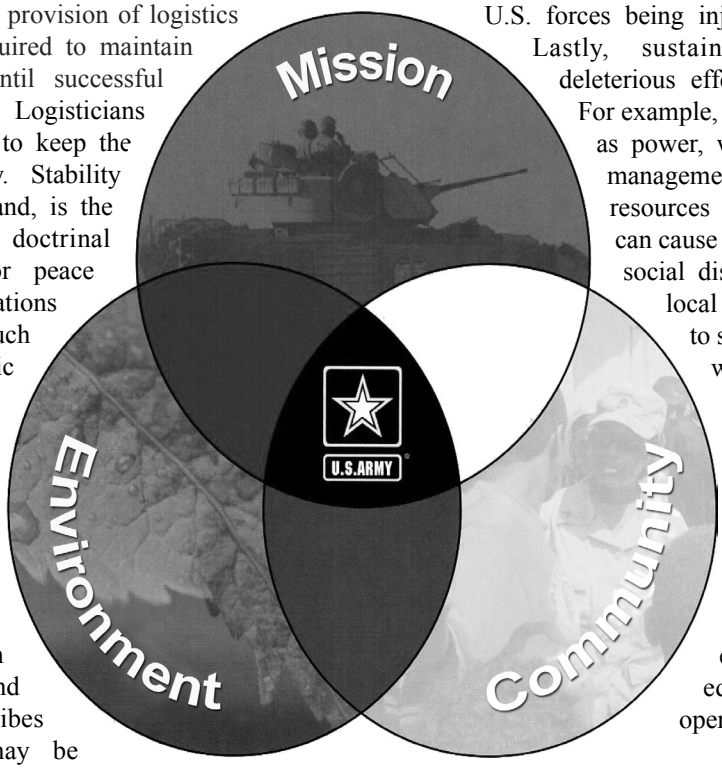
stability. Sustainment is the provision of logistics and personnel services required to maintain and prolong operations until successful mission accomplishment.[4] Logisticians discuss sustainment issues to keep the force supplied and ready. Stability operations, on the other hand, is the Army's all-encompassing doctrinal term for peacekeeping or peace enforcement. Stability operations are related to missions such as humanitarian and civic assistance, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and counterdrug efforts.[5] The Department of Defense defines stability operations as the military and civilian activities conducted across the spectrum from peace to conflict in order to establish or maintain order in states and regions.[6] This term describes where military forces may be employed to restore order and stability within a state or region where competent civil authority has ceased to function. These forces may also be called upon to assist in the maintenance of order and stability in areas where they are threatened, where the loss of order and stability threatens international stability, or where human rights are endangered.[7] Sustainment and stability operations produce results in the short-term while sustainability, in contrast, requires future thinking and a systems approach to provide long-term strategies and solutions for current and future challenges.



The Army defines sustainability as a comprehensive systems approach to planning and decision-making designed to sustain the natural infrastructure, which includes the land, water, air, and energy resources required to conduct our mission.[8] The Army Strategy for the Environment notes that sustainability benefits from the interrelationships of the triple bottom line of mission, environment, and community.[9] Yet, sustainability has other salutary features.

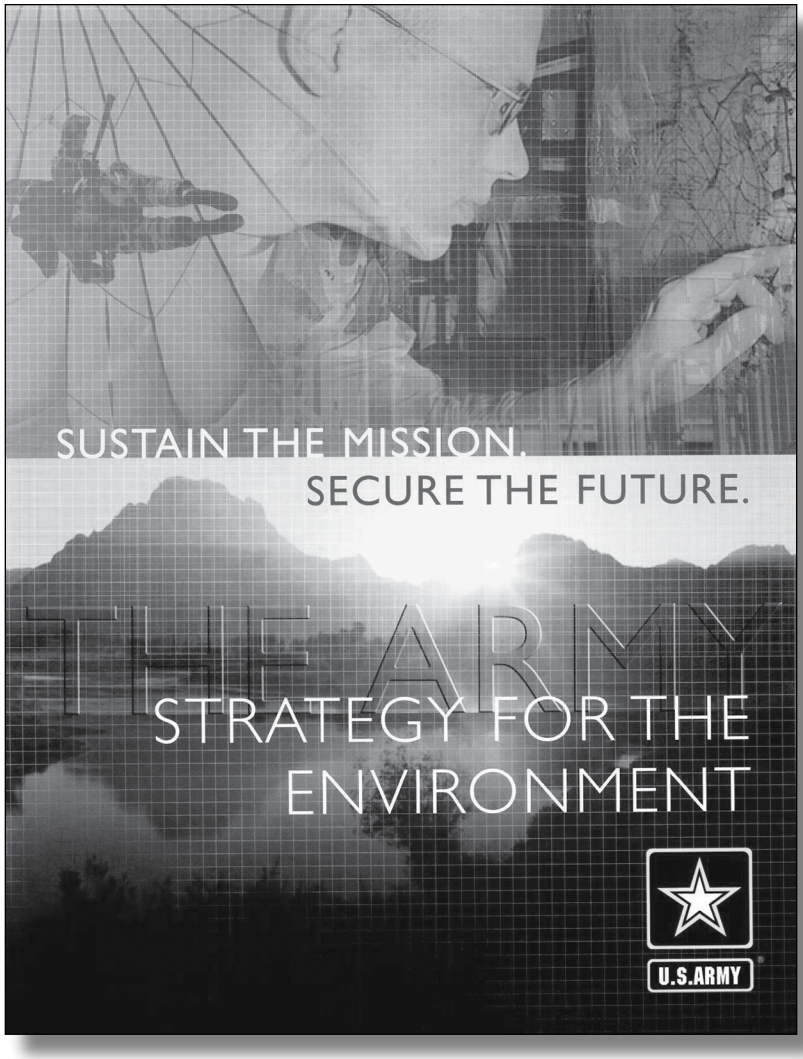
Sustainability, for example, expands the traditional military concept of stability[10] by requiring planners and operators to consider societal and environmental factors[11] during stability operations. Sustainability also can enhance military operations through base operations by providing more flexibility, reducing the logistics tail, and providing greater freedom for independent action for U.S. forces.[12] Additionally, reducing the logistics tail can reduce reliance on contractors by eliminating demands on the local infrastructure and environment. In overseas operations, reducing the number of contractors and logistics requirements reduces overall operational security requirements, thereby lessening costs and the likelihood of U.S. forces being injured, killed, or kidnapped. Lastly, sustainability addresses other deleterious effects of military operations. For example, drawing utility services such as power, water, sanitation, and waste management; labor; materials; or other resources from the local environment can cause resource shortages, inflation, social dislocation, and disruption of local economies.[13] Thus, attention to sustainability is the means by which the Army can enhance its capabilities in several mission dimensions—facilities management, combat operations, and nation building. So how does the Army get there? There are numerous paths, but one area to consider is education in both the formal education system and the operational environment.

Educating the Force

Educating the force can originate in the Army education system, but this is not the only place a Soldier will learn about sustainability. For example, the use of operations orders can help a Soldier learn about sustainability by the tasks the commander implies or specifies within the mission. The application of the officer evaluation report (OER) system is another method to enhance learning about sustainability, because the Soldier will be evaluated on the task. Soldiers can also learn about sustainability through the conservation and recycling practices of the garrison installation.

Nonetheless, institutionalizing sustainability into the Army is the first step to producing a culture that embraces sustainability practices, but this cannot be attained unless changes in strategy and doctrine are examined. "As the Army transforms to a future force with new systems, organizational structures, and new doctrine to achieve full-spectrum operational capability, our training enablers and infrastructure, along with realistic and relevant training venues, must continue to be readily available to match the timelines we have established to field the future force—one comprised of highly trained Soldiers poised to fight new and different kinds of conflicts while maintaining traditional warfighting skills."[14] This statement represents a rallying cry for the Army to address sustainability as a way forward. Training, training venues, and infrastructure changes are but a piece of how sustainability can be managed within the framework of education.

Institutionalizing sustainability into the Army requires the efforts of the Army Training and Doctrine Command



Cover of The Army Strategy for the Environment

(TRADOC). TRADOC states that it is the architect of the Army and that it "thinks for the Army" to meet the demands of a nation at war while simultaneously anticipating solutions to the challenges of tomorrow.[15] TRADOC can integrate sustainability education throughout its Noncommissioned Officer Education System and its Officer Education System. The curricula associated with these systems would introduce sustainability through maintenance training programs, weapons systems training, and training environments that simulate combat conditions to instruct students how to use sustainability practices within base camps. The school environment itself could help teach sustainability practices. As an example, the United States Army Engineer School can educate its students in sustainability by teaching them how best to use the land and natural resources where operations and training occur, thereby minimizing damage to the environment while protecting the land and its resources for the future. Another potential mode is to use training scenarios that include societal and environmental drivers and variables, such as the impact of prolonged regional drought on social stability and well-being, the possible destabilization of society through human migration, and the preventive measures that could forestall adverse results.

Sustainability could be institutionalized the way risk management was institutionalized into the Army. Risk management was introduced as a safety program to reduce the number of accidents that Soldiers experienced during training and military operations. It accomplished this aim by helping Soldiers understand how an accident could occur and instructing them on ways to minimize the probability of an accident or prevent it altogether. Risk management is the process of identifying, assessing, and controlling risks arising from operational factors and making decisions that balance risk costs with mission benefits.[16] Army leaders integrate risk management into their mission planning to anticipate safety hazards, establish preventive control measures, and require annual training.

Education on sustainability can be included in mission planning for both training and operations, as was the case for risk management. Commanders at every level can introduce sustainability considerations into their planning process to mitigate potential hazards, minimize destruction to the land and other natural resources, and reduce risks to animal and human life. Also, a specific annex can be incorporated into the operations order to implement and enforce sustainability measures. As commanders prepare their operations orders, they would use the sustainability annex to help subordinates prepare individual solutions for sustainability, based on their situations.

Another way to educate the force is through the after-action review (AAR) process. The AAR can incorporate sustainability lessons learned from the event so that the participants can learn the positive and negative effects of the operation on the environment. Identifying these effects allows commanders to determine how to change their standing operating procedures to incorporate sustainability practices into future operations.

Another avenue to educating the force regarding sustainability is by addressing it in the OER system. The evaluation requires that the commander conduct face-to-face counseling with subordinate officers as a way to monitor the subordinates' performance. If sustainability is included as a feature of the OER, this will force change within the ranks. At a minimum, the officers and their subordinates will learn about sustainability and figure out ways that produce results. The OER system is an excellent tool for commanders to document innovative ideas that subordinates develop on sustainability. Once the ideas begin to emerge and flow up the chain of command, sustainability practices will be more than just an idea and will be truly instilled into the Army culture.

Conclusion

The Army is transforming its formations to address current and future national security obligations. As the Army transforms, it should educate its Soldiers to incorporate sustainability practices and concepts to fulfill those obligations without undermining the environment or causing unnecessary harm to the societies it is charged to safeguard. Instilling sustainability into Army culture will require constant training, incorporating sustainability practices and concepts into—

- The Army School System.
- Mission training environments.
- Installations, through development of sustainable training areas and resident programs.
- OER system.

Taking such steps will instill the processes needed to educate Soldiers about their responsibility for sustainability. Further, promoting this training will help Soldiers in the future because the demands on them will be even greater as climate change, human migration, and burdens on dwindling natural resources forecast future regional conflict in places where the Army will be deployed to protect our national interests. Thus, Soldiers who are aware of these future demands, conscious of the critical nature of sustainability, and educated to take a systems approach to problem solving will "sustain the mission and secure the future" for the United States Army.[17]

Colonel Hill joined the United States Marine Corps in 1977 and served as an automotive mechanic until 1982, when he joined the Marine Corps Reserves. In 1984 he joined the West Virginia Army National Guard, went to officer candidate school, and received a commission. His experience includes assignments with the Engineer and Military Police Branches. He served in Operation Iraqi Freedom as base defense commander and provost marshal for Camp Anaconda in Balad. In 2005, Colonel Hill was provost marshal during Operation Katrina after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated Louisiana and Mississippi. He is a graduate of the Command and General Staff Officers Course, Combined Arms and Services Staff School, Military Police Officer Advanced Course, and the Engineer Officer Basic and Advanced Courses. He holds a bachelor's in military leadership from the University of Charleston and a master's in adult and technical education from Marshall University. He is a graduate of the Army War College and serves with the West Virginia Army National Guard as Commander, 197th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), Camp Dawson, West Virginia.

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